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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0093

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0803

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1977

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1926

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2262

RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC

RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEFAAA/DIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC 0249

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 0171

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 002079

SENSITIVE

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, INL

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: SENIOR COUNTER-NARCOTICS OFFICIAL DISCUSSES
DRUG SITUATION, INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public internet.

2. (SBU) SUMMARY. The Embassy's Office of Military Cooperation (OMC) and the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Office (INL) met with Colonel Nygmedzhan Saparov, the Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Combating Drug Trafficking of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan, on October 9 to discuss the current drug situation in Kazakhstan, the progress of program implementation, and plans for future. Saparov discussed recent operations, successes, and challenges. He also detailed needs that could be met with additional U.S. assistance. END SUMMARY.

CURRENT SITUATION

3. (SBU) Colonel Nygmedzhan Saparov, Deputy Chairman of the Committee, welcomed the representatives of OMC and INL and discussed the current drug situation in Kazakhstan. Colonel Saparov noted the problems of domestic production. He explained that the Chu Valley in Southern Kazakhstan has 140,000 hectares of wild marijuana with high THC content. The Chu Valley is apparently not under the control of a single cartel and anyone is free to harvest there. There are also marijuana plantations in the Almaty and Kyzylorda Oblasts. Ephedra grows in Zailiskoe Alatau and Moiynkum. However, Kazakhstan faces much more serious problems from the transit of narcotics, Saparov argued. With the transit of opiates through Kazakhstan, the country faces an increasing problem with addiction. International experts estimate that 10-15% of drugs trafficked into Kazakhstan remain in the domestic Kazakhstani market. The Ministry of Health reported that there are 55,211 registered drug addicts, including 4,759 women and 3,855 minors.

4. (U) The Committee primarily focuses on narcotics, precursor chemicals, and organized crime. According to Saparov, law enforcement bodies investigated approximately 7,000 drug-related crimes during the first eight months of 2008. During that period, over 18 metric tons of drugs were seized, including 1.3 metric tons of heroin. Two new divisions of the Committee were established last year -- Ontustik (South) to combat organized crime in Southern Kazakhstan and Delta-Dolina to contend with criminal groups and

drugs in the Chu Valley. At the last meeting of CIS drug control agencies, which took place in Russia, it was announced that the work of the two new units resulted in a 17% increase in the price of cannabis. To control precursor chemicals in Kazakhstan, the Committee established a Section on Licensing the Legal Trade of Precursors to better oversee the 1,500 entities that directly or indirectly participate in the legal trade of precursors.

INTERNATIONAL AND INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION

15. (U) The Committee actively cooperates with law-enforcement agencies in neighboring countries. Since the beginning of 2008, 26 controlled-delivery operations were conducted, including 11 with Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. The operations resulted in the seizure of 600 kilos of drugs, including 83 kilos of heroin. Kazakhstan cooperates with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and foreign embassies in Kazakhstan. CSTO members annually conduct Operation Kanal (Channel) to find and destroy narco-channels through their territories. This year, Afghanistan and Pakistan also participated in the operation. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) has signed 50 intergovernmental and interagency agreements and the Committee cooperates with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The creation of the Central Asian Regional Information Coordination Center (CARICC), of which a Kazakhstani is the director, is an attempt to create an effective line of defense against narcotics shipments from Afghanistan.

16. (U) Operation Mak (Poppy) is an annual operation conducted from May 20 to October 20 to combat the harvesting of marijuana in the Chu Valley. Kazakhstan had previously suspended the annual

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operation, but revived it two years ago. During the operation, the Committee closely cooperates with the Border Guard Service (BGS) of the National Security Committee and creates a security zone around the valley to prevent the movement of the crop out of it. Inter-agency mobile units also conduct patrols throughout the valley. The BGS provides personnel, horses, helicopters, and vehicles to support the operation.

COMMITTEE NEEDS

17. (SBU) Though combating drugs is one of the highest priorities for the Kazakhstani government, the Committee is not allocated sufficient funds to achieve its ambitious objectives. Therefore, in response to OMC's request, Saparov detailed the unmet needs of the Committee. He requested truck scanners and the construction of canine kennels at the local Departments of Internal Affairs. He noted that the record seizure of 537 kilos of heroin on the Kazakhstani-Russian border on March 27 was made using a scanner installed at the Kairak customs checkpoint. Currently, the Committee operates seven internal narcotic checkpoints on the primary narco-trafficking routes. Two of these -- Ulken in Almaty oblast and Kyzyltu in South Kazakhstan Oblast -- are nearly impossible to detour around. If scanners are supplied to these posts, Saparov believes that two major routes, Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan-Almaty and Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan, will be almost totally blocked.

18. (SBU) Following the meeting, the head of the Committee's International Cooperation and Interagency Coordination Section also raised with INL the need to effectively inspect railcars. As has been previously suggested by the BGS as well, a majority of narcotics are being trafficked via major rail routes through Kazakhstan. INL is looking for possible assistance to MVD mobile units and BGS to allow them to search railcars without unduly delaying trains, which are a major means of transportation for both passengers and cargo throughout the region.

19. (U) COMMENT: The Committee is eager for enhanced cooperation and will gladly accept further assistance. Saparov coordinates operational work and understands well the need for basic intelligence to be supported by specialized equipment and a professional canine service. Training and equipping operational

staff is essential to his Committee. There is also need for continued interaction with the United States and others international partners. END COMMENT.

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